

School's in Session – Teach Your Child to Walk to School Safely!

Pedestrian safety tips for back to school.

Days are getting shorter, nights are getting cooler and the stores are loaded with backpacks, notebooks, pens and pencils. This can mean only one thing, summer is winding down and school is right around the corner. So now is the time, before school starts, to talk with your child about walking to school safely and demonstrating for your child safe walking practices.



Tips for Helping Your Child Walk To School Safely

1. **Teach Your Child How to Cross a Road.** Children often struggle with the speed of oncoming traffic. Make sure your child looks left-right-left again before crossing the street. Remind your child that if a vehicle is coming do not try to cross, vehicles move much faster than he/she can run.
2. **Instruct Your Child to Use a Crosswalk.** Children should be encouraged and instructed to use a crosswalk to cross a street whenever possible. Teach your child that a crosswalk alerts drivers that someone may be crossing the road, but he/she needs to make sure to look left-right-left and cars have stopped before crossing. Some children assume that because they are in a crosswalk that traffic will stop.
3. **Walk Your Child's Route to School.** Before your child begins a new school year, take time to walk with your child on the route she/he will take to school. Use a walkability checklist to identify areas of concern and use the walks to demonstrate to your child safe walking practices.
4. **Use the Crossing Guard.** Schools often have crossing guards stationed in high traffic areas where children need to navigate intersections, heavy traffic, and traffic signals. Teach your child to always cross the street with a crossing guard whenever possible. Discourage your child from crossing in other areas that may be very dangerous.
5. **Know Where Sidewalks Are.** Map out where sidewalks are on your child's route to school. Make sure your child uses the sidewalks. If there are no sidewalks available teach your child to walk on the side of the road that faces oncoming traffic. If a lack of sidewalks is a problem use a walkability checklist to document the problem and discuss it with school administrators and elected officials.
6. **Stay on the Route.** Remind your child to stay on the route you and he/she have mapped out.
7. **Teach Your Child What to Do If Approached by A Stranger.** Tell your child that he/she should never approach anyone they do not know even if the person seems nice. If a person they don't know approaches them instruct your child to make lots of noise and fight to get away. Remind your child to tell a grown up immediately if he/she has been confronted by a stranger.
8. **Avoid Animals.** Remind your child to stay away from animals behind fences or in yards. Animals are often very territorial. Teach your child what to do if they are approached by a stray dog or wild animal.
9. **Dress Your Child Appropriately.** Make sure your child is dressed for the weather. Also, if your child is wearing shoes that need to be tied make sure your child knows how to tie.
10. **Use A Buddy System or Create a Walking School Bus.** A walking school bus is just that. Parents who live on the same walking route to school volunteer to walk groups of children to and from school. For more about starting a walking school bus go to www.walkingschoolbus.org

